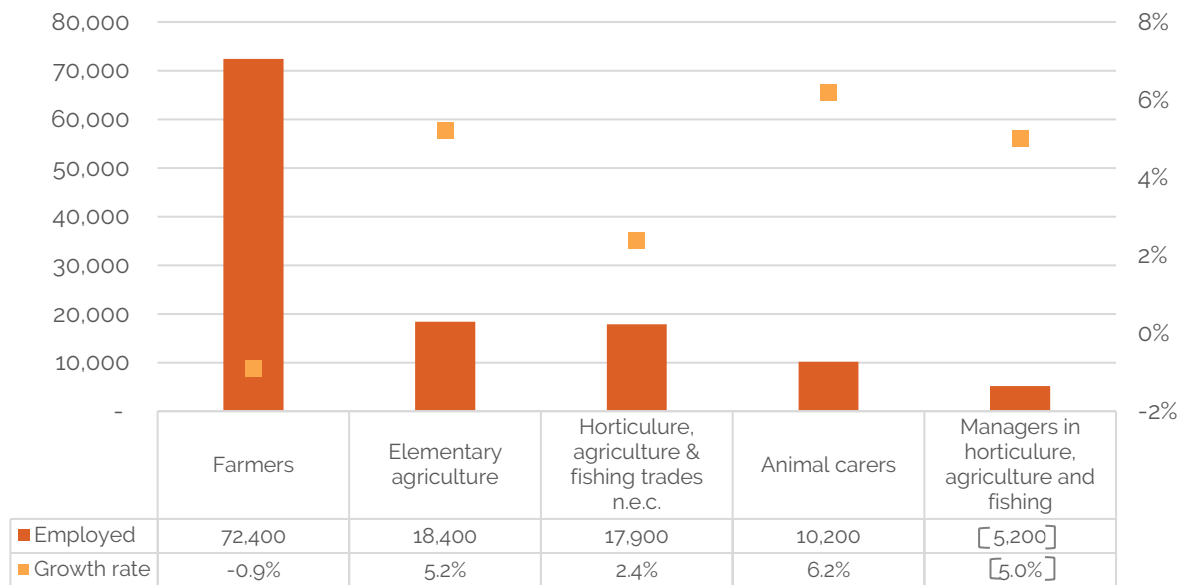


10.10 Agriculture & Animal Care Occupations

Figure 10.10 Annual Average Employment (2023) & Annual Average Growth Rates (2018-2023)



Overall employment	124,000
Share of total workforce	5.0%
Main sectors of employment	82% - Agriculture sector
Employment growth	+6,700 between 2018 and 2023 +1.1% on average annually (compared to +3.5% for total workforce)

2023	% Female Q4	% Full-time Q4	% Aged 55 years & over Q4	% Irish citizens Q4	% Third level graduates Q4	Number of new employment permits	Recruitment Agency Survey
Managers in horticulture, agriculture and fishing	[97%]	...	101	
Farmers	10%	81%	63%	99%	20%		
Horticulture, agriculture & fishing trades n.e.c.	...	65%	[39%]	94%	...		
Elementary agriculture	[25%]	40%	29%	90%	...	481	
Animal carers	[57%]	[74%]	...	77%	[60%]	68	
Overall total	16%	71%	50%	95%	22%	650	

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO (LFS) data, DETE, and SLMRU Recruitment Agency Survey (RAS)
Numbers in square brackets should be treated with caution; an ellipsis (...) denotes numbers too small to report

Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Although there was some employment growth for this occupational group overall, it was considerably below the national annual average for the five-year time period examined. Despite the low employment growth, issues with recruitment for some agricultural roles persist. Half of the workforce were aged 55 years or over (mostly related to the age profile of farmers), the oldest age profile across all the occupational groups. Teagasc's Climate Action Strategy highlights the key role that agriculture will play in reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change, including the need to maintain and increase food production and improve biodiversity.¹

Occupation	Economic summary
Managers in horticulture, agriculture and fishing	Numbers employed in this occupation are too small to allow for any analysis. Employment permits issued in 2023 related to farm managers such as dairy and pig farming (particularly relating to farrowing).
Farmers	Although there was a negative employment growth rate for farmers on average annually over the five-year period, employment levels have seen some growth since 2021. Almost two-thirds of farmers were aged 55 years and older and 40% held at most a lower secondary education. Farmers will have a key role in Ireland's Climate Action targets in the context of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the need for an adaptation of farming practices to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change; upskilling/reskilling will be key in the coming years to adjust to these requirements.
Horticultural, agricultural & fishing trades n.e.c. (e.g. gardeners)	Employment growth over the five-year period was below average for this occupation, although employment levels have increased by almost 3,000 since 2022. At 39%, the share aged 55 years or older was more than double the national average of 19%. A relatively high share (35%) of persons employed in this occupation were employed part-time. Vacancies related to gardeners, arborists and tree surgeons with Skills for Growth data pointing to issues recruiting saw doctors and professional foresters. Although the numbers involved are very small ² , an increase in demand for trained forestry workers may arise in line with Ireland's Forest Strategy (2023-2030). Forestry workers and speciality harvesting technicians were removed from the ineligible list for employment permits in December 2023, subject to a quota.
Elementary agriculture	Employment growth for elementary agriculture workers over the five-year period was above average; although employment levels fell in 2022, they increased again in 2023. Three-fifths of those employed in these occupations were employed part-time, 44% were aged 15-24 years and 29% were aged 55 years and older (both age cohorts above the national average). Almost a half held at most a lower secondary education (the highest share across all occupations). A high volume of vacancies were advertised through the DSP Jobs Ireland for roles including horticultural operatives, and dairy farm assistants. Employment permits were primarily issued for dairy farm assistants and horticultural operatives. Issues with recruitment are likely to relate to some extent to the apparent attractiveness of the job; the high share of younger persons employed and part-time employment suggest that some of these jobs may experience a high level of job churn which is leading to the high volume of job vacancy adverts. One of the key strategic actions in the National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 is to review horticulture course availability and suitability to attract talent and promote sustainability of the sector. ³ In addition, the increased adoption of automated processes could help alleviate labour shortages in certain areas. ⁴
Animal carers*	Annual employment growth over the five-year period was strong for animal carers with employment levels increasing since 2021. This group had the highest share of females employed (57%) across all of the agricultural occupations; the share of non-Irish citizens (23%) was above average. The high share of persons employed with third level qualifications is driven by veterinarians. A small number of vacancies related to equine workers (groomers and work riders), and dog groomers with posts for work riders identified in the Skills for Growth data as difficult to fill.

**This occupation has been updated from previous editions and now includes veterinarians (previously included in healthcare occupations).*

¹ <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2022/Teagasc-Climate-Action-Strategy-2022-2030-web.pdf>

² Partnership for Skills (June 2022) report. Available at <https://regionalskills.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5022a479ede2060ea00e2b0ee&id=236e45ec9f&e=9ac4cage00>

³ www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/259509/9bad0225-cb0a-4b8c-a713-5a63b632e61e.pdf#page-null

⁴ <https://assets.gov.ie/229861/gd3aa8c0-b2b8-4b71-9341-b154b1e7ac20.pdf>